



Zadok Ben-David

## NATURAL RESERVE

17th November 2023 - 26th January 2024

Opening 16th November 2023

6 pm - 9 pm

via Vincenzo Monti 21, Milan, 1° floor

### THE EXHIBITION

A recent research by the University of Oregon confirms the appearance of the first plants on land about 460 million years ago, long before the first “modern” human began to walk, which occurred only about 300,000 years ago. Plants have always played an important role in mankind’s evolution, by providing nurturement, shelter and the first elements that allowed the creation of the first tools and medicaments. Humans over the centuries have learned to identify and recognize plants by naming them, cultivating them, attributing them symbolisms, using them to decorate their homes and offering them as gifts on the happiest and saddest occasions.

By studying them, humans discovered that plants allow them to breath, by producing oxygen through the process of chlorophyllian photosynthesis. Mankind owes so much to plants, but often forgets about them, not considering that they too are living things, that they are born, they live and they die.

The Botanic Gardens Conservation International estimates that 30% of the existing botanical species on the planet today are at risk of extinction due to various causes: climate change, overexploitation, change in their habitat; in simple words, because of humans.

Award-winning artist **Zadok Ben-David** has for years been pursuing an artistic quest that promotes the return to a state of coexistence in harmony and respect not only with plants but with all living beings and people on the planet.

It is therefore Nashira Gallery’s delight, as the only representative of the artist in Europe, to exhibit the large-scale installation *Blackfield* (2007-2021): a circle of 5 m in diameter, containing 6000 reproductions of plants and flowers, from all corners of the world. The images taken from 19th century Botanical Encyclopaedias are, on one side painted black, communicating sadness, a sense of ending; on the other side they are painted colourfully in acrylic making us smile, expressing the beauty of nature in all its shades and hues. Ben-David’s work is as succinct as it is an effective representation of the opposition between life and death that leads the viewer to reflect on their own emotions and transience.

“*Blackfield* is an optimistic psychological installation presenting two extreme states – life and death. Yet it is more about choice than fate. The flowers are intended as a metaphor, a symbol of two extreme emotionals – happiness



and grief". - Zadok Ben David

*Blackfield* is displayed at the center of our gallery space, alongside cases in which the artist exhibits a selection of plants and trees that, thanks to the reflection of tactically placed mirrors, simultaneously show their dual nature to the viewers' eye: *Clouds Over Greenfields* (2023), with round blue flowers; *Changing Mood 5* (2023), a dandelion in the shades of pink; *Late Bloom 2* (2023), a sprig in autumn tones but with shiny red berries. Sculptures that in their reflections become totally black, dark drawn strokes and lines.

In his sculptures Zadok Ben-David proves that he knows how to skillfully use materials and colours to create continuous reactions and emotions in the viewer, so much so that even a simple cactus that characterizes the Mediterranean landscape in *Happy Days (Large)* (2023) acquires strength and power by becoming a monument to nature.

For the occasion, the artist has also decided to present 3 of his video works, in direct dialogue with his botanical sculptures.

In *Same Place Other Times (Panorama)* (2023) silhouettes of plants are arranged in a beautiful green meadow under a blue sky to compose a heavenly scenario. Slowly the colors change, the sky darkens becoming stormy, the flowers blacken, the landscape seems to incinerate before our eyes in a hellish depiction. This video-loop about the fragility of the natural world expresses its endless cycle of destruction, either by the natural processes of the earth or by human intervention, such as climate change or war.

*Conversation Peace* (2018) shows two opposing silhouettes of men, facing each other, their bodies display the view of a desert landscape with blue skies filled with clouds, until insects of various kinds and multicolored butterflies begin to fall from above, piling up from the bottom of the silhouettes until they catch fire and are burned away completely. In the beginning of the video there is a harmonious dialogue between the figures with butterflies and insects moving between the two figures, but this quickly transforms into a fiery argument that serves as a metaphor for the human experience on earth: man is not only part of nature. It is nature.

Zadok Ben-David's exhibition is a deep reflection on the nature of human beings and their role in the planet's ecosystem. Who knows if in the future we will be able to understand, the language of plants, as recent studies claim, and not only exploit them but enter into dialogue with them.



## BIOGRAPHY

**Zadok Ben-David** (Beihan, Yemen, 1949)

Zadok Ben-David lives and work between London and Portugal.

Ben-David represented Israel at the Venice Biennale in 1988 and participated in biennales worldwide including XXII Cerveira

International Art Biennial, Portugal (2022), Breda Photo Biennial, Netherlands (2020), Krasnoyarsk Biennale, Russia (2019), Busan Biennale, South Korea (2010), Biennale Cuvee, Austria (2009); "Wonder" Singapore Biennale, Singapore (2008) and Sculptuur Biennale, Netherlands (2007).

The artist has exhibited in various museums around the world.

Solo shows and group exhibitions include: Kröller-Müller Museum, Holland (2023), Contemporary Art Museum Maebashi, Japan (2023), Itchimbia Cultural Center, Ecuador (2022), Kew Royal Botanical Gardens, London, United Kingdom (2021), The Centro de Arte Contemporânea Graça Morais, Portugal (2019), Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, France (2018), Kenpoku Art Festival, Japan (2016), Art Gallery of Uzbekistan and the Israel Museum (2015), National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Astana (2014), Mysteski Arsevnal, Ukraine (2012), Guangdong Art Museum, China (2007), Singapore Museum of Art, Singapore (2003), Neanderthal Museum, Germany (2000), Palais Royal, Paris, France (2000), and Kunst Europa, Germany (1992).

Ben-David has also exhibited extensively in art galleries across Europe, Australia, America, Central Asia and the Middle East, and his works are included in many public and private collections around the world.

Ben-David is the recipient of numerous awards including the Grande Biennial Prémio at the XIV Biennale Internacional de Arte de Vila Nova de Cerveira, Portugal (2007) and the Tel Aviv Museum Prize for Sculpture (2005). In 2008, he was commissioned by the Beijing Olympics to create a unique installation.

## FOR INFO:

Tel. +39 342 33 166 40

mail. [info@nashiragallery.com](mailto:info@nashiragallery.com)

[www.nashiragallery.com](http://www.nashiragallery.com)